Bear Lake Road Reconstruction Frequently Asked Questions Rocky Mountain National Park

1) Why are you doing this road reconstruction project?

Bear Lake Road was completed in 1928 – until 2003 and 2004, when the upper 4.3 miles of road was reconstructed, no major roadwork had taken place. This two-year project will widen 5.1 miles of the road and improve the road surface to better accommodate park shuttle buses and the heavy volume of traffic on this popular route. The project will improve safety and engineering conditions. In addition, a 0.9 mile section will be rerouted away from Glacier Creek in order to prevent impacts to wetlands and riparian habitat and minimize costs. The road is open year-round so the wider road will also assist with safer snowplow operations.

2) Why are you doing the construction during the busiest part of the year? Due to weather, the best time for construction at high elevations is during the summer months. The contractor, working with Federal Highways, is also trying to accomplish as much work as possible during non-peak seasons.

3) Will I be able to access the Bear Lake Road during this major construction project?

From May 29, through October 9, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Bear Lake Road, approximately one mile southwest of Moraine Park Visitor Center to Bear Lake, is accessible by free shuttle bus only, seven days a week. Private vehicles are allowed both directions prior to 9 a.m. and after 4p.m. Visitors in private vehicles, who make the 9 a.m. cutoff time, are allowed to leave throughout the day. All visitors, in private vehicles or shuttle buses, should expect **at least** two 20-minute delays both directions through the construction area. There are no planned construction delays between Park & Ride and Bear Lake. There are night closures during the construction. See the next question for information on night closures. The 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. road closure is located in Moraine Park at the Kaley Cottage Road intersection, before crossing the Big Thompson River. An information kiosk at this location will be staffed by park rangers during the closure time.

4) Will there be night closures?

Night closures along Bear Lake Road begin on Tuesday, June 12, and will continue through early October. The evening closures will be on Tuesday and Thursday nights only. The closures will take place from the Big Thompson Bridge to the Park & Ride. The road will be closed from 10:30 p.m. on Tuesday nights to 5:30 a.m. Wednesday mornings and again at 10:30 p.m. Thursday nights through 5:30 a.m. Friday mornings. Access to Moraine Park Campground, Moraine Park Visitor Center and Cub Lake/Fern Lake Trailheads is not affected by the night closures.

5) So I can drive my private vehicle on Bear Lake Road?

Yes, but only prior to 9 a.m. and after 4 p.m. past the information kiosk roughly one mile southwest of Moraine Park Visitor Center. Visitors in private vehicles, who make the 9 a.m. cutoff time, are allowed to leave throughout the day. Be

aware of the potential of night closures in your plans. If you plan to make the 9 a.m. closure time, keep in mind you could be delayed in construction prior to reaching that area so plan ahead and provide enough travel time for such delays. Again, if you make the 9 a.m. cut-off time you may leave the Bear Lake area at any time, just plan ahead for delays and night closures.

6) If I am traveling Bear Lake Road early in the morning, or late in the evening will I miss the delays?

No. The delays will be occurring 24 hours a day due to one-lane traffic and the work crew's schedule. If you plan to reach the 9 a.m. closure time, keep in mind you could be delayed in construction prior to reaching that area. Also be aware of night closures in your plans.

7) Why can't I take my private vehicle up the road from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.?

There are close to 2 million visitors who access the Bear Lake Road annually. In 2011, there were over 420,000 riders on the shuttle routes that access the corridor. Because the entire road is only 9.4 miles and dead-ends at Bear Lake, the sheer congestion of vehicles would limit any construction work taking place on the road. With the number of vehicles delayed, mixed in with shuttle buses, there would be no semblance of a shuttle schedule. Much of the work will require only one lane to be open.

8) If the construction is not taking place on weekends, why can't I take my private vehicle between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on those days?

The road will be a construction zone. The contractor has the option to work on weekends. Even if there is no "active" work taking place, congestion and one-lane closures requires shuttle access on weekends as well. With the number of vehicles delayed mixed in with shuttle buses there would be no semblance of a shuttle schedule.

9) If I miss the 9 a.m. cut-off, how will I know?

Park staff have a kiosk set up roughly 1 mile southwest of Moraine Park Visitor Center, before crossing the Big Thompson Bridge. Rangers will turn around vehicles that do not reach the area by 9 a.m. sharp. If you are hoping to access the area in your private vehicle before 9 a.m. give yourself **plenty of time** to reach the closure area early. Keep in mind you may be caught in construction delays or congestion prior to reaching the kiosk. Please do NOT expect to be allowed through after 9 a.m. even if you have been sitting in traffic or construction delays. Please plan ahead!

10) If I want to go to the Bear Lake area between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. what are my options?

For those visitors who want to access the Bear Lake area between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., the best option will be to park in Estes Park at the Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride or the Estes Park Visitor Center and take the Hiker Shuttle in to Rocky Mountain National Park. Visitors should expect congestion. If you are staying in lodging in Estes Park please see question #19.

11) How long might the shuttle ride be from the Estes Park Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride to Moraine Park Visitor Center and to Bear Lake?

From the Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride the ride will take approximately 30 minutes to Moraine Park Visitor Center due to stops at the Estes Park Visitor Center and the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. From the **Moraine Park Visitor Center** you will then have the option to board a bus for the Bear Lake Route or you can board a bus for the Moraine Park Route. From Moraine Park Visitor Center the shuttle ride to Bear Lake will be approximately 25 minutes, with stops at Hollowell Park, Park & Ride, Bierstadt Lake, Glacier Gorge and Bear Lake **plus** the possibility of at least two 20 minute delays in each direction. Plan accordingly with water, snacks and a bathroom stop before you board the bus!

12) Should I stay away from the Bear Lake area?

The Bear Lake area is a very popular destination with a variety of recreational opportunities and incredible hiking trails. Most facilities along Bear Lake Road are open and available to the public. You can still access the Bear Lake area if you keep the following in mind:

- 1) Plan Ahead
- 2) Hike Early
- 3) Hike Late
- 4) Carpool limited space is available at the Park & Ride and all trailheads in the park.
- 5) If you want to access the Bear Lake area between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., take the Hiker Shuttle from either the Estes Park Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride or the Estes Park Visitor Center. Keep in mind parking may be limited.
- 6) Expect congestion and delays.

13) Are there any areas along Bear Lake Road that are closed this summer?

Glacier Basin Campground and Tuxedo Park will be closed this summer. Please see questions #44 through #48 concerning additional camping information.

14) How will fishing access on the Big Thompson River be impacted by this project?

Visitors should expect congestion and limited parking at the popular picnic and angler area in lower Moraine Park, north of the Big Thompson River.

15) Do I have to take the shuttle bus to the Cub Lake and Fern Lake Trailheads?

Although these areas are serviced by the Moraine Park Shuttle Route, shuttle buses are not required and you can drive to these trailheads. However, please keep in mind that parking is extremely limited at these trailheads and unless you arrive early in the morning, you will likely not find a parking space.

16) When does the shuttle run?

The park's three shuttle routes are modified during the construction.

The Bear Lake Route buses run between Moraine Park Visitor Center and Bear Lake with stops at Hollowell Park, Park & Ride, Bierstadt Bus Stop, Glacier Gorge Trailhead and Bear Lake.

The **Moraine Park Route** buses run between the Moraine Park Visitor Center and the Fern Lake bus stop with stops at Moraine Park Campground, Cub Lake Trailhead and Fern Lake bus stop.

The first bus departs from the Moraine Park Visitor Center at 7 a.m. and the last bus leaves at 7 p.m. The last bus of the day leaves Bear Lake and Fern Lake Trailheads at 7:30 p.m. Bear Lake Route buses run every 15 minutes but will be delayed during periods of road construction. Moraine Park Route buses run every 20 minutes.

The **Hiker Shuttle Route** buses make stops at the Estes Park Fairgrounds Parkn-Ride, the Estes Park Visitor Center, the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, and the Moraine Park Visitor Center where passengers will transfer to either the Bear Lake Route or the Moraine Park Route. The first bus leaves the Town of Estes Park Visitor Center at 6:30 a.m. and the last bus leaves the Moraine Park Visitor Center bound for Estes Park at 8:00 p.m. The Hiker Shuttle runs on an hourly schedule early and late in the day, switching to a half-hour schedule from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Construction delays may affect the shuttle bus schedule as well but we are attempting to minimize this to the extent possible. If a bus is delayed getting to a shuttle stop, your patience and understanding is appreciated.

17) Where can I find a printout of the park shuttle map and schedule? In a variety of places including the park newspaper as well as on the park's website at www.nps.gov/romo under the Bear Lake Road Reconstruction section.

18) Is the park shuttle free?

There is no fee for the shuttle, although park entrance fees apply. Entrance passes can be purchased ahead of time at park entrance stations as well as automated pass machines at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and the Estes Park Visitor Center. Buses will not be stopping at entrance stations. If you have entered the park before your shuttle ride and already have a pass, bring it with you when boarding the shuttle bus at the Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride or the Estes Park Visitor Center.

19) If I am staying at lodging in Estes Park, how can I access the shuttle system?

The town of Estes Park shuttle routes start daily operations on June 29 and run through September 9. All routes stop at the Estes Park Visitor Center. Check their shuttle routes and schedule at www.estes.org/shuttles to see how you may leave your car behind and access the Hiker Shuttle in to the park.

20) What kind of buses will be used for the shuttle routes and what is their capacity?

The same buses that are normally used. Bus capacity is 45 total; 28 seated and 17 standing. The Moraine Park Route uses smaller buses with a 20 seat capacity.

21) Are the buses accessible to persons with disabilities?

Yes. All park shuttle buses are accessible and can accommodate wheelchairs.

22) Does the bus stop at Sprague Lake?

There is no shuttle stop at Sprague Lake, as there is not adequate room for shuttle buses to maneuver. To access Sprague Lake during the construction project, visitors will need to drive their vehicle there before 9 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

23) Are there restrooms available at all the shuttle bus stops?

There are restrooms available at all the shuttle stops within the park except for the Cub Lake Trailhead, Moraine Park Campground stop along the Cub Lake Road, and at the Moraine Park Campground stop. Restrooms are available at the Estes Park Visitor Center and Estes Park Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride.

24) Where can I get water along the park shuttle routes?

Please bring your own water. If you need to fill your water bottle the best locations are the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and Moraine Park Visitor Center restrooms and drinking fountains. There is a new spigot to fill water bottles outside the Moraine Park Visitor Center. There is water available at Bear Lake from a drinking fountain during the middle of the summer. There is also water available at the restroom sinks in the Estes Park Visitor Center.

25) Can I take my bike on the bus up to Bear Lake?

Shuttle buses cannot accommodate bikes. Bikes are not allowed on backcountry trails in the park and are discouraged on Bear Lake Road during the construction.

26) Will bicycles be allowed on any section of Bear Lake Road in 2012? Bicycles are strongly discouraged from riding on the Bear Lake Road during this project due to road conditions, traffic and delays. Bicycles are treated as private vehicles and only allowed to ride past the kiosk before 9 a.m. and after 4 p.m.

27) Can I take my dog on the bus?

Only service dogs are allowed on the bus.

28) Will my backpack equipment fit on the bus? Yes.

29) If there is bad weather, will the buses still run? Yes.

30) Do you have other suggestions as to where I should go?

Rocky Mountain National Park encompasses 415 square miles. There is a list of numerous trails in the park summer newspaper that you can choose from. As with any summer at Rocky Mountain National Park, it is likely that from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. you will encounter congested areas in many areas of the park. The west side of the park is not as highly visited as the east side of the park.

31) Will tour buses, recreational vehicles and vehicles pulling trailers be allowed on the Bear Lake Road during construction?

They will be allowed during the same time as private vehicles before 9 a.m. and after 4 p.m. However, they are discouraged from accessing the area due to narrow, winding roads and limited parking.

32) Will overnight parking be allowed at Park & Ride or Bear Lake? Overnight parking/camping will not be allowed at Park & Ride, Bear Lake, nor any other area in the park unless authorized with an overnight backcountry use permit.

33) Will backcountry campers be allowed to take their private vehicles up the road at any time?

Yes, visitors who have an overnight backcountry camping permit will be given access. The rangers at the kiosk on Bear Lake Road will verify the permits.

34) What if I want to take a horseback ride with Glacier Creek Stables located near Sprague Lake?

Reservations are strongly recommended. When making a reservation you will receive a confirmation code that you will give to the rangers stationed at the kiosk on Bear Lake Road. There are horseback rides from a variety of other locations. You can find a list of providers at

http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/goodsandservices.htm

35) How much does this reconstruction project cost, and who is paying for it?

The Federal Highway Administration awarded a \$23.4 million contract to American Civil Constructors and is administering this project on behalf of the National Park Service. American Civil Constructors is based in Littleton, Colorado. The overall cost of the project is \$27.7 million. This program is being funded through the Federal Lands Highway Program.

36) Do you have a plan to "reveg" this area?

When the project is completed, roughly \$1,000,000 will be spent on revegetation along the Bear Lake Road corridor. This work includes collecting native live plants and seeds, greenhouse propagation and nursery care, outplanting, and exotic plant control. Native topsoil and rocks will be saved and reused on the road shoulders by the contractor. Remaining on-site native plant restoration will be done by a NPS crew and the Natural Resources Conservation Service who produce the park's native seed.

37) Once the reconstruction project is complete, will private vehicles be allowed back in the area?

Yes.

38) I noticed numerous parking spaces available at Park & Ride when it was shuttle access only. Why don't you wait until the parking lots fill up before requiring shuttle access only?

The park is limiting cars due to congestion on the road and construction activity - not based on parking space capacity. Maintaining a consistent, daily schedule is also important to the construction process and accurate information to visitors.

39) Why do you have to build so many retaining walls?

To allow for drainage ditches and road shoulders, the *total* width of the road will increase. Currently, in the areas where the walls will be built, the slopes meet the road edges with no ditches or shoulders. As a result, rocks often roll down on the road creating safety hazards. Building the road out a few extra feet will provide the needed width to meet modern safety standards.

40) Is the road widening? If so, how much and why?

The new width of the travel lanes will be 11 feet. This will be the same as the existing width for about half of the project. The other half will increase in width by one foot. However, because there will be new 1 foot shoulders on both sides and new drainage improvements, the *total* width will increase. The park has worked closely with road designers at the Federal Highway Administration to minimize impacts to the environment while meeting current safety standards and providing drainage for road longevity. The end result will be very similar to the final width of the improvements that were constructed on upper Bear Lake Road in 2003-2004.

41) Why the need for a reroute?

A 0.9 mile section is being rerouted away from Glacier Creek in order to prevent impacts to wetlands and riparian habitat and reduce costs. The park studied several alternatives for the road in the area where it currently parallels Glacier Creek. The current road is very narrow, lacks guardrails, and was not designed to accommodate today's shuttles, large RVs and trucks. There is no drainage ditch, and runoff from the road drains directly into the creek.

The Environmental Assessment that was prepared for Bear Lake Road examined four alternatives for the section of road along Glacier Creek. If the road would have been reconstructed adjacent to the creek, retaining walls would have been needed to be built directly in the creek edge for almost a mile. This would be very expensive and would have negative environmental consequences. Because of these issues, other alternatives were considered including shifting the alignment into the hillside and rerouting the road away from the creek. A comprehensive analysis of the alternatives showed that the environmental impacts were less if the road was built in the forest rather than adjacent to the creek and wetlands, and it was actually less expensive to reroute the road.

42) What will you do with the old section of road?

The existing road bed will be rehabilitated into a hiking trail which will provide fishing access along the creek.

43) Why weren't bike lanes built along the new road?

Accommodating bike lanes both uphill and downhill in the park's challenging terrain would have resulted in significant environmental impacts. The park is exploring the possibility of a multi-use trail system on the east side of the park that would ultimately connect with the trail system that is being developed in the Estes Valley. The trail system would accommodate bikes, would likely be separated from the road, and could potentially provide access all the way to Sprague Lake. Park staff will be engaging the public in the planning process for the potential multi-use trail in the future.

44) Why is Glacier Basin Campground closed this summer?

The contractor is staging equipment and material in the campground. With the night work and night closures, camping at Glacier Basin Campground would not be an enjoyable experience this summer.

45) What if I have a reservation at Moraine Park Campground, will the construction impact my access to this campground?

No. You will encounter a rough road surface and possible delays on the road to Moraine Park Campground, but it will not impact your access to the campground. Night closures will not affect access to Moraine Park Campground.

46) Should I make reservations to camp in the park this summer?

Reservations are strongly advised this summer, as the Glacier Basin Campground is closed and all campgrounds are expected to be very busy. Have peace of mind knowing a campsite is waiting for you in beautiful Rocky Mountain National Park! Reservable campgrounds can fill by reservation, so plan ahead. Two drive-in campgrounds take reservations: Aspenglen and Moraine Park. Reservations for late-May through September can be made six months to one day ahead and online at www.recreation.gov, or by calling 1-877-444-6777. International callers can phone 518-885-3639. Visitors who reserve early have the best opportunity to secure the type of site and location preferred. Three group sites are reservable at Moraine Park Campground.

47) If park campgrounds are booked, are there alternatives to reserve in the area?

A. Yes. On the east side near Estes Park, there are Larimer County Open Space, US Forest Service, and private campgrounds:

Larimer County Campgrounds in the Estes Park Area

Reservations can be made 6 months (180 days) to 3 days ahead both online at www.larimercamping.org and through the reservation call center, 1-800-397-7795

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Reservations
East Portal	Estes Park: Hwy 36 to 66; on the left at end of road	5/14 thru 10/15/12	1-800-397-7795 www.larimercamping.com • Hermit Park: 970-577-2090 if
Marys Lake	Estes Park: Hwy 36/Moraine Ave. west to Marys Lake Rd. Turn left 1.5 mi to campground.	5/14-thru 10/15/12	within 3 days If problems making reservations call 970-577-2090
Hermit Park	2 mi east of Estes	3/1- thru 12/19/12	
(campground & cabins)	Park on Hwy 36		

U.S. Forest Service: www.fs.fed.us/arnf

Forest Service Reservations: www.recreation.gov or 1-877-444-6777

USFS Reservable Campgrounds east side

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Notes	Reservations
Camp Dick	Approx 6.5 mi north of	5/18-Late	½ reservation,	1-877-444-6777
	Ward on Hw 72	October	½ first come, first served	www.recreation.gov
Olive Ridge	On Highway 7, mile	5/24-Late	½ reservation,	1-877-444-6777
	marker 14 (between Wild	September	½ first come, first served	www.recreation.gov
	Basin & Allenspark)			
Peaceful Valley	Approx 6.5 miles north of	5/24-Late	½ reservation,	1-877-444-6777
	Ward on Highway 72	October	½ first come, first served	www.recreation.gov

Estes Park private campgrounds: Contact Estes Park Visitor Center at www.visitestespark.com or 1-800-443-7837 or 970-577-9900

On the west side of the park:

U.S. Forest Service: www.fs.fed.us/arnf

Forest Service Reservations: www.recreation.gov or 1-877-444-6777

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Notes	Reservations
Arapaho Bay	6 mi NW of Granby on Hwy	5/25-Mid	Reservations	1-877-444-6777
	34 then 9 mi east on	October		www.recreation.gov
	County Road 6			
Green Ridge	12 miles NW of Granby on	5/18-?	Reservations	
	Hwy 34 then 2 mi east on			
	County Road 66			
Stillwater	8 miles northwest of	5/18-Mid	Reservable & first-come,	
	Granby on US Highway 34	October	first-served sites	

Grand Lake private campgrounds: Contact the Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce at www.grandlakechamber.com or 1-800-531-1019.

Group Campsites

All are reservable at www.recreation.gov or 1-877-444-6777 except Midland (see below).

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Notes
EAST SIDE			
Jacks Gulch (1 group site)	Off of Pingree Park Road (off Hwy 14 west of Ft. Collins)	June 15 - Nov 11	Max group size is 100 day use or 60 for overnight use. Tents + nine RVs (9 electric hookups available).
Mountain Park (1 group site)	Poudre Canyon, Hwy 14 west of Ft. Collins	May 24 - Sept 30	Max group size is 100. Tent + RVs. Picnic or day use for 75. Pay showers, covered pavilion (with electrical outlet). Maximum vehicle length: 50'
Pickle Gulch (6 group sites)	4 miles north of Blackhawk on Hwy 119 (Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway)	May 19 - October	5 sites max 30 people, 1 max 15 people, 1 reservable picnic area for 150 people
WEST SIDE			
Cutthroat Bay (2 sites)	Arapaho National Recreation Area, 8 miles NW of Granby on US Highway 34	Open 5/24 - Early September	2 reservable loops; 50 each, including 2-4 RVs & multiple tents. No shade, except for the pavilions, as the trees were removed during the recent mountain pine beetle epidemic.
Midland (1 site)	On the east side of US Hwy 40, 4.5 miles south of Winter Park	Reservations: (970) 726-1132, or (970) 726- 0889 during summer	Site accommodates up to 36 people. Minimally developed campground has tent camping, portable toilets. No water.
South Fork (1 group site)	In the Williams Fork Valley, 25 miles south of Parshall	Open 6/8 - mid- Oct	1 reservable non-electric group campsite. Designated horse camping with a small corral in 1 st come-1 st served campground.
Willow Creek (1 group site)	Arapaho Natl Rec Area, 6 miles NW of Granby off Hwy 34 on Willow Creek Reservoir	Late May - Mid October	1 reservable, tents-only, group site for up to 20 people. Boat ramp. Only non-motorized boating is allowed on Willow Creek Reservoir.

48) What if I'm Coming Without Reservations?

The park's first-come, first-served campgrounds on the east side of the park are Longs Peak (tents only) and Moraine Park Loop B; on the west side of the park is Timber Creek Campground.

Reservations cannot be made for first-come, first-served campgrounds. Visitors must go to the campground to check for site availability.

First-come, first-served campgrounds can fill up quickly, especially on weekends and busy summer days. You can't count on a first-come, first-served campsite being available, and sites will not be held. Planning on camping at a first-come, first-served site can be disappointing if it's full; back-up plans are highly recommended.

Very few local area campgrounds are first-come, first-served:

East side

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Notes	Reservations
Camp Dick	Approx 6.5 mi north of	5/18-Late	½ reservation,	1-877-444-6777
	Ward on Hw 72	October	½ first come, first served	www.recreation.gov
Meeker Park Overflow	13 mi south of Estes Park on Hwy 7 at mile marker 11	6/22-Early September	Always first-come, first-served	
Olive Ridge	On Highway 7, mile	5/24-Late	½ reservation,	1-877-444-6777

	marker 14 (between Wild Basin & Allenspark)	September	½ first come, first served	www.recreation.gov
Peaceful Valley	Approx 6.5 miles north of Ward on Highway 72	5/24-Late October	½ reservation,½ first come, first served	1-877-444-6777 www.recreation.gov

West Side

Campground	Location	2012 Dates	Notes	Reservations
Stillwater	8 miles northwest of Granby on US Highway 34	5/18-Mid October	Reservable & first-come, first-served sites	1-877-444-6777 www.recreation.gov
Sunset Point	6 mi NW of Granby on Hwy 34 then 1½ mi east on County Road 6	5/18-Late September	First-come, first-served	
Willow Creek	6 mi NW of Granby on Highway 34 then 3 miles west on Country Road 40	5/25-Mid October	First-come, first-served	

49) How many miles of road does this construction project affect?

There are 110 miles of road in Rocky Mountain National Park; this project involves 5.1 miles of road and access to another 4.3 miles of road.

50) What impacts will there be on Bear Lake Road in 2013?

We won't know the answer to this question until this winter. It depends on what is accomplished this year. Stay tuned for those details when they are determined!

Thank you for taking the time to read these questions and answers. If you still have further questions that were not answered, please call the park's Information Office at (970) 586-1206 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days a week.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this final phase of major road reconstruction on Bear Lake Road.